

Empowering Parents

Evaluation of Parents as
partners in safeguarding
children and young people
in Lancashire project
2014 – 2017

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Acronyms and Note on Terminology

ABE	Achieving Best Evidence
CSE	Child sexual exploitation
DfE	Department for Education
MASH	Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
Pace	Parents against child sexual exploitation
PLO	Parent Liaison Officer
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service

For ease of reading, the term 'parent' is used throughout this report and includes other caregivers within the family who may be looking after a child. The term 'perpetrator' is used throughout the report to refer to those who groom and sexually exploit children. In cases of peer-on-peer abuse, these terms are not necessarily appropriate. However, all the children whose parents took part in this evaluation had been abused by adults.

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Executive Summary

Overview

1. This report presents the findings of an evaluation of the project 'Parents as partners in safeguarding children and young people in Lancashire, June 2014 to May 2017'. The project was delivered by Parents against child sexual exploitation (Pace) and centred around the work of a Parent Liaison Officer (PLO) placed in the multi-agency 'Engage' team in Blackburn with Darwen, Lancashire.

2. The PLO offers flexible, one-to-one support to parents and families whose child is at risk, or a victim, of child sexual exploitation (CSE) using the 'relational safeguarding model' developed by Pace. The aims of the evaluation were to explore the impact of the PLO in relation to three key outcomes for parents: increased awareness and understanding of CSE; playing a more active part in safeguarding their child and receipt of support through the judicial process.

3. Semi-structured, individual interviews were undertaken with parents who had received one-to-one support from the Parent Liaison Officer (n=10), and with professionals who had worked alongside the PLO in the Engage team (n=11). This data was supplemented by one focus group with parents (n=4), an evaluation form for parents (n=17), interviews with PLOs (n=3) and observation of the Engage team.

Key Findings: PLO impact on parents

4. All parents who took part in the evaluation reported that the PLO had helped them understand CSE. They explained that understanding how children could be manipulated, groomed and controlled helped them place responsibility for the abuse on the perpetrator, which in turn helped them not to blame either their child or themselves as parents. Parents also observed that understanding the grooming process helped them to make sense of times when their child's behaviour had been avoidant, hostile or out of character, which helped them to respond more empathetically to their child.

5. The PLO equips and empowers parents to safeguard their children through supporting them to develop and implement safety plans. As a result, parents reported having greater control in the home and confidence in their capacity to protect their child. These plans directed parents to report their children missing, and to share information with the police and other services.

6. The PLO provides intensive and long-term support to families whose case is going to court: from Crown Prosecution Service referral to post-trial readjustment. Parents valued the information, reassurance and practical support the PLO provided before, during and after a trial, and professional interviewees in the Engage team identified this support as a key contributor to the team's strong record of child/family attendance at court.

7. Parents described themselves as more emotionally resilient and able to cope with the impact of CSE because of the PLO's support. Being able to talk to the PLO reduced their isolation and the on-going and intense encouragement from the PLO helped them manage their emotions through the distress of various situations related to their child's exploitation.

8. Some parents reported improvements in relationships in the home because of the advice and support provided by the PLO. This support helped parents, and other family members like siblings, understand the experience and perspective of the child who had experienced CSE.

9. Some parents highlighted additional support they had received from the PLO, including resolving housing difficulties, advocacy with other services and practical help with appointments.

Key Findings: PLO impact on multi-agency work on CSE cases

1. The PLO is co-located with the police, children's social care, health and other agencies within the Engage team. These partners report that the PLO role has had a positive impact on their awareness of families' needs, rights and capacities.

2. The work of the PLO supports the Engage team to empower and work with parents. Professional colleagues describe the PLO as a conduit for the voice of parents in the team, which helps agencies understand how to better support them. Agencies working with the family are held accountable by the PLO to the decisions and plans made for the child.
3. The PLO's liaison role creates a pathway for information to be shared between parents and professionals. Professionals observed that parents' energies are channelled into partnering with those agencies and Pace can manage, regulate and improve the quality of information shared, using their knowledge of CSE.
4. Engage professionals noted the quality and quantity of information provided by parents, through Pace, to be highly valuable. Alongside greater awareness of the needs and capacities of parents, this information provides them with a more holistic picture of the family environment. This in turn helps the team make better safeguarding decisions for the child, siblings and their peers. Information provided by the PLO was also described by police interviewees as significant in affecting the direction and outcome of police investigations into CSE cases.
5. Professional partners observed that the PLO's liaison with, and support for, parents helps other agencies achieve their objectives by allowing them to focus on their primary operational tasks and engage with parents in more strategic ways. They described Pace playing a valuable role by 'preparing the ground' for other agencies to build their own relationships with families.
6. The PLO works alongside children's social workers on CSE cases. Both parents and professionals valued the child and parent having separate workers who nevertheless work closely with each other in terms of planning, information sharing and reinforcing key messages to children and families.

Discussion

7. The work of Pace in the Engage team is underpinned by the following principles.
 1. Protecting children by strengthening the family
 - a. Empowering: building on strengths, removing barriers, advocating
 - b. Parent-focused: identifying and meeting needs, taking parents views seriously
 - c. Dual support: recognising the child within their family context
 2. Knowledgeable about CSE: providing specialist information and experience
 3. Independent support in a multi-agency team: challenging and working with other agencies
 4. Available, flexible and responsive: adapting to parents' needs and wishes
8. The evaluation identified two key factors that enable Pace to achieve these outcomes. Firstly, the PLO works within a multi-agency team that has a great deal of experience of dealing with the victims and perpetrators of CSE and believes in the value of working with parents. Being co-located with other agencies is an additional benefit in terms of information sharing and building trusting relationships. Secondly, both the current and former PLO in the team have extensive experience of working with parents, and on CSE cases. Parents and professionals respect their expertise, which enhances their work and reputation in the local area.
9. The current funding arrangements are a constraint on the work of the PLO. The PLO's part-time contract means she is prioritising high-risk/high-need cases, which means fewer families are being supported at the point of early help or investigation. Another constraint is the wide geographical area the PLO covers in East Lancashire, which can limit work with families because of travel time.

10. Parents and professionals both identified a need for more capacity in the Pace service to ensure that those parents who need this valuable support can access it.

11. The evaluation has shown that the work of the PLO, utilising the relational safeguarding model, has contributed to positive outcomes for both parents and professional partners. It has also identified the scope for the relational safeguarding model to be developed further by exploring the links between the PLO's activities and the various outcomes referred to in this evaluation. Moving forward, a theory of change could explain how parents' knowledge, confidence, safeguarding capacity and parenting are impacted by the PLO, how they inter-relate and how/why they contribute to reduced risk to the child.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

This report outlines the findings of a small-scale evaluation of the 'Parents as partners in safeguarding children and young people in Lancashire' project, an initiative funded by Comic Relief and the Safer Lives programme which ran from May 2014 to April 2017. The evaluation was undertaken by staff from The International Centre: researching child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking at the University of Bedfordshire.

1.2 Parents as partners in safeguarding children and young people in Lancashire project

In 2014 Parents against child sexual exploitation (Pace) received grant funding from Comic Relief and the Safer Lives programme to deliver the Parents as partners in safeguarding children and young people in Lancashire project. Pace supports parents in responding to the sexual exploitation of their children by perpetrators external to the family. The grant funded a Parent Liaison Officer (PLO) working in the Engage multi-agency CSE team, which is based in Lancashire working to disrupt abuse, convict perpetrators and protect children who are at risk of CSE¹.

Support for parents and families affected by CSE

The evidence base on the impact of child sexual exploitation (CSE)² on parents and families is still emerging, but there is increasing recognition that parents and other family members are both affected by CSE and in need of support to address this. As the Department for Education (DfE) guidance on CSE (2017:14) notes:

"Parents and carers can feel excluded in work with children and young people who are, or who are at risk of being, sexually exploited by perpetrators external to the family. Where assessment shows it is safe and appropriate to do so, parents and families should be regarded as a part of the solution. It is crucial to work with them not only to assess the risks of harm faced by the young person or child but to help them understand what the young person has experienced, the risks they face and how they can be supported and protected. The parents may need direct support and help to improve family relationships and keep their child safe."

Research and practice documents highlight a range of ways in which parents and families suffer when a child is sexually exploited. These can include: negative impact on physical, mental and emotional wellbeing; social isolation; being threatened or harassed by perpetrators; and relationships in the home coming under severe strain (Kosaraju, 2009; Palmer and Jenkins, 2014; Pace, 2016; Unwin and Stephens-Lewis, 2016). Pace raises awareness of the needs of parents, and has been developing practice responses through its partnership in multi-agency teams.

1. The grant funding provided for one full-time PLO in the Engage team. During the grant period, the PLO post became part-time to support the creation of a PLO manager role in Lancashire. The original PLO became the first PLO manager, and the new PLO began work in November 2015, working 22.5 hours a week.

2. Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (DfE, 2017).

Pace and the relational safeguarding model

The Engage team is one of three multi-agency CSE teams working across Lancashire, and covers the areas of Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn, Ribble Valley, Pendle and Rossendale³. Multi-agency CSE teams have been present in Lancashire since 2003 and Pace has been working with those teams in various ways since 2009 when the first PLO began working in the Engage team (see Palmer and Jenkins 2014 for more information on Pace involvement in these teams).

In this time Pace has developed and articulated a model for working with families affected by CSE, which they describe as 'relational safeguarding', and which underpinned the work of the PLO in the project. Pace has detailed the rationale and features of the model in another publication 'The Relational Safeguarding Model: Best practice in working with families affected by child sexual exploitation' (Pace, 2014).⁴ They define the model as follows.

'Professionals working in partnership with parents, facilitating and supporting them, in order to maximise the ability and capacity of statutory agencies and families to safeguard a child at risk of/being sexually exploited.

The relational safeguarding model focuses on

- Maximising the capacity of parents and carers to safeguard their children and contribute to the prevention of abuse and the disruption and conviction of perpetrators
- Early intervention and prevention
- Enabling family involvement in safeguarding processes around the child, including decision making
- Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the family in recognition of the impact of CSE.
- Balancing the child's identity as both an individual and as part of a family unit.'

Pace contrast the relational safeguarding model with standard approaches to child protection, which focus on assessing and investigating parents and assume that they 'may be partly responsible for the abuse that a child is experiencing' (Pace, 2014:8). Instead, the relational safeguarding model assumes that parents want to and have the capacity to protect their child, unless there is evidence to the contrary. This approach acknowledges the significant strain that sexual exploitation places on families, and responds by empowering parents to be partners in safeguarding their child alongside professional agencies such as social care and the police.

PLO activity

In practice the relational safeguarding model involves a PLO providing flexible group-based and/or one-to-one support for parents. The evaluation identified the following dimensions of support offered to parents and professionals.

- Information and advice about CSE
- Help developing safety plans to protect the child
- Emotional support, encouragement and a listening ear
- Advocacy for parents when liaising with other agencies
- Updates on actions from the police, social care and other agencies
- Signposting to further support.

The PLO has a complementary role to the above within a multi-agency team

- Working alongside children's social care and other agencies, to support the family
- Sharing information about the child or family's needs, or that will support safeguarding and/or investigations within the team
- Advocating for the family's needs to be met

3. The other multi-agency CSE teams are Awaken (Blackpool and Fylde; Lancaster, Morecambe and Wyre) and Deter (Preston, Chorley, South Ribble and West Lancashire).

4. See the full publication for further information about the relational safeguarding model.

As well as one-to-one support, Pace organise Parent Network Days, where parents come together across the country for mutual support. They have also begun to extend their national volunteering programme, whereby volunteers are equipped to act as befrienders and offer peer support to parents who may need more emotional input than the PLO is able to give at that time. The evaluation did not explore the impact of these elements of the service.⁵

PLO role within the Engage team

Each case that is passed to the Engage team from the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is first assessed by a social worker to identify the level of risk to the child and then passed to the PLO who assesses the parents' needs.⁶ The assessment process recognises that levels of need may change and allows for the fact that some parents who may initially have been categorised as 'low need' may come to need more intensive support as they hear more details about what has happened to their child.

The PLO's caseload comprises mostly higher need cases where there is known exploitation and/or a prosecution is underway. In the first year of the project the PLO had also been delivering preventative and early-help support through drop-in and group sessions. However, when the PLO post became part-time in 2015, this additional work was not viable. In the final year of the project the PLO was developing a new strategy for preventative work, which involved building relationships with, and raising awareness among, existing community groups.

1.3 The Evaluation

As part of their funding agreement, Pace commissioned a small-scale evaluation of the funded programme of work. The aims were to evaluate the impact of the PLO on parents affected by CSE in Lancashire in relation to three outcomes:

- 1) Parents increasing their awareness and understanding of CSE
- 2) Parents playing a more active part in safeguarding their child
- 3) Parents receiving support through the judicial process from the point of Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) referral to post-trial readjustment.

Chapter three of the report covers these outcomes, and chapter four draws on interviews with professionals to explore what additional impact the PLO has on the work of the Engage team in relation to CSE. Finally, chapter five is a discussion of the findings.

2. Methodology

This was a small-scale evaluation, based on the views and experiences of parents and professionals who had been supported by, or worked with, the PLO located in the Engage team (see Table 1). The evaluation received ethical approval from the University of Bedfordshire Research Ethics Committees.

5. Although it was not part of the formal evaluation, some parents who had accessed these days described how valuable it was to have contact with other parents who had been through the same situation.

6. Pace assess parents as having low, moderate or intense needs. This is a change from the previous structure, where young people and parents could refer themselves directly to Pace. The PLO was open-minded about the value of having one referral pathway through the MASH, but aware that this could close down other ways to identify victims.

2.1 Parent engagement

Interviews were the primary data collection tool in the evaluation. An evaluation protocol was developed that included a risk assessment framework for parental engagement in the research. If there were no concerns, or risks could be effectively managed, Pace provided parents with an information sheet explaining the research.⁷ Parents who gave initial verbal consent were then contacted by the researchers, who explained the research in more detail and sought their informed consent to take part in an interview.

The PLO in the Engage team provided support to 63 parents from 2015-16, the two years covered by the evaluation. Thirty of these parents, who had received one-to-one support, gave their initial consent to be contacted about the evaluation. Of these, twenty did not respond to further contact and ten went on to take part in an interview.⁸

Parents' perspectives were elicited in three different ways:

- Evaluation forms: A total of 17 parents completed evaluation forms on their engagement with the PLO. This included four parents who had attended drop-in or group support and 13 who had received longer-term ongoing support from the PLO.⁹

- Individual semi-structured interviews: Ten parents who had received intensive one-to-one support from the PLO took part in a telephone (n=7) or face-to-face (n=3) individual interview about their experiences of this support.¹⁰
- Focus groups: Four parents who had accessed drop-in and group support from the PLO took part in a focus group discussion about their experience of Pace, their needs and the degree to which they felt these were met.

2.2 Professional engagement

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with 14 professionals:

- Current (n=9) and former (n=2) members of the Engage team, eight in person and two over the telephone. The aim was to gather multi-agency perceptions and experiences about Pace's impact for families and on local services, and to consider how these related to the data provided by parents.¹¹
- The PLO working in the Engage team
- A PLO working in another local area, and a former PLO in the Engage team (now a PLO manager). The aim was deepen understanding of the relational safeguarding model.

7. Pace approached the parent they had been supporting most intensely to take part in an interview, but the information sheet made it clear that the team would value speaking to both parents if they would like to take part, and would be flexible to make this possible.

8. Of these 63 parents, 58 received one-to-one support, and the other five attended the drop-in only. Twenty-eight of these did not give their consent to be approached to take part in the evaluation.

9. Two evaluation forms were created: one for parents judged to have limited needs and one for those who had moderate or intense needs. Moderate/intense need forms were given to parents by the PLO when the PLO stopped working with them and/or at the end of each year of support, and were posted directly to the evaluation team by parents. The moderate/intense need form included additional questions on experiences of being supported through a court case, for those who had experienced this (see appendix 2). Limited need evaluation forms were distributed at the group and drop-in sessions run by Pace. A ballot-box was available at these sessions for parents to return their completed evaluation forms anonymously; they were then posted to the evaluation team by the PLO.

10. See Appendix one for the interview schedule.

11. Interview schedules for professionals and PLOs, and the focus group schedule are available from lucie.shuker@beds.ac.uk.

The evaluators also conducted three observations of the Engage team. This included two morning briefings and one multi-agency meeting, where referrals and responses were discussed and cases allocated. This provided insight into how information was shared, and the role of Pace in these contexts.

Table 1: Overview of data sources¹²

Parents	17 evaluation forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 – limited need cases • 13 – moderate/intense need cases
	1 focus group (4 parents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 female (all mothers)
	10 interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 mothers • 1 father • 1 grandmother
Professionals	11 interviews within Engage team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detective Sergeant (1) • Detective Constable (2) • Police Constable (1) • Safeguarding Nurse – NHS (2) • Sexual Health Worker – Brook (1) • Missing from Home Coordinator – Police (1) • Young People’s Worker – Children’s Social Care (1) • Children’s Social Care Manager (2)
	3 interviews with PLOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 PLO in Engage team • 1 PLO working outside Lancashire • 1 PLO manager

12. We do not have data on the number, age, gender or other characteristics of the children of parents involved in the evaluation

2.3 Data analysis

Most interviews were digitally recorded, and then transcribed verbatim for accuracy. Where interviewees did not want their interviews recorded, written notes were made and then typed up. All data was processed and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act and the ethical protocol for the evaluation.

Interview transcriptions were uploaded to NVivo, a program for qualitative analysis. A coding framework was developed that drew from the outcomes in Pace's original project plan, and was further refined and expanded after reading interview transcripts. Open-text questions on the evaluation forms were coded using the same framework and answers to closed questions were counted. The data was coded thematically, and memos were written to capture key analytical themes and relationships within the data. The data from different elements of the research has been integrated and presented thematically. Each interview has been numbered and identifies whether the quote is from a parent or professional.

2.4 Limitations of the evaluation

As a small-scale evaluation, there are limits to the learning presented in this report. The evaluation focused solely on the PLO working within the Engage team. As a sole worker, this makes it harder to distinguish the impact of the model of Pace support from the impact of the individual. Interviewing another PLO and the PLO manager was an attempt to triangulate understanding of the model, although this data has not been used directly to support findings relating to the project-specific outcomes.

It was beyond the scope of the work to try to attribute outcomes in individual cases to the work of Pace. This is, firstly, because Pace work very closely with other agencies in a multi-agency team and impact cannot easily be attributed solely to their interventions. Secondly, the limited resources of the evaluation

meant it was not possible to gather baseline data for key outcomes that could help us understand the impact of the model, or to establish a control group of parents who did not receive support from Pace as a point of comparison. As self-selected, the sample was not representative of all parents who have encountered Pace, which means it is likely to be biased towards parents who have had a positive experience. Furthermore, the semi-structured design of the interviews meant that it was not possible to systematically compare parents' responses to individual questions. No data was gathered from children themselves, whether those affected by CSE or their siblings, and without children's perceptions we are further limited in our understanding of the difference Pace makes for families.

Finally, there were some challenges in collecting data. Palmer and Jenkins (2014) suggest that Pace consider how to capture parents' views promptly after support ends, given that parents often don't want to revisit such a difficult time of their lives to take part in evaluative activity. The evaluation forms were designed to capture this data in a timely way, but only 17 forms were collected. Parents in families affected by CSE are managing multiple demands on their time and energy, so there is a potential need for parents who now volunteer with Pace to be consulted on the best way to gather parental feedback.

3. PLO outcomes for parents

The findings below draw on the contributions in interviews and focus groups and the information provided in evaluation forms to explore the ways in which the PLO was able to achieve the anticipated three high-level outcomes of the project for parents:

- Increased awareness and understanding of CSE
- More active role in safeguarding of child
- Supported through judicial process

Beyond considering these specific outcomes it should be noted that parents taking part in the evaluation found the work of Pace valuable and helpful in its widest sense. All the parents interviewed were positive about the work of the PLO, highlighting responsiveness, friendliness, how helpful the information was and the value of having an advocate. As previously discussed, sexual exploitation can have devastating consequences for both the child and their family, and many parents were particularly animated when explaining the difference it made to have someone there to help them cope with this experience. A series of similar phrases and words were repeated by a majority of different parents across the interviews and focus groups: she was 'brilliant', the support was 'fantastic'. One parent wrote on their evaluation form 'She's been with us all the way' (Form 2), while another wrote 'We can't thank them enough' (Form 10). Although they were asked, parents did not give any negative feedback about the PLO.¹³

3.1 Parents' awareness and understanding of CSE

All ten of the parents interviewed described the PLO helping them understand the dynamics of CSE, and all 17 of the parents who filled out evaluation forms, agreed that contact with the PLO had helped them understand how CSE might affect their child.¹⁴ This included verbal explanations, being shown videos, and being given booklets. The information conveyed included: how a child is groomed; how perpetrators think; how a child's behaviour might change; why children go missing; and the impact of trauma. Some parents explained that this knowledge made sense of behaviours that they might otherwise have interpreted as aggression or resistance. In addition, some parents highlighted that this information helped them spot signs of grooming and abuse including secretive phone use and changes in clothing and behaviour.

Data analysis suggested there were three inter-related effects for parents of having this new understanding of sexual exploitation and grooming:

Parents placing responsibility on the perpetrator

Becoming aware of the presence of an abuser/abusers and understanding grooming tactics helped parents to see how perpetrators could have manipulated and controlled their child and turned their attention toward protecting them. One parent expressed it as being supported to know how to fight '*to get the child back*' (Parent 9).

Knowing that it's nothing I've done wrong as a parent, and absolutely nothing that my daughter's done wrong herself... So it's knowing that – the control is in the hands of the predators, do you know what I mean? (Parent 9)

She (the PLO) explained about the CSE side and how they (abusers) do it in such a subtle way that you don't notice it, because this is the thing, you feel guilty yourself for not noticing it and everything, but she's explained it all to us and you can understand then how it does happen. (Parent 7)

Parents blaming themselves less

Parents referred frequently to a sense that they were responsible in some way or that the abuse meant they had failed as parents. In response to this, one parent (Parent 5) said, the PLO was 'constantly reassuring' the couple that it wasn't their fault. Others remarked on the importance of understanding that it could happen to anyone and was therefore not a reflection of their parenting.

13. Some parents did provide ideas for how the service could improve – see chapter 5.

14. The question was 'Has contact with the parent support worker helped you understand how CSE might affect your child?' and possible responses were 'Yes', 'No', 'Somewhat' and 'Not Applicable'.

It just sort of changed everything for us and made us think that we weren't on our own and it wasn't our fault. Because we were chewing ourselves up, we just thought it was our fault all the time, we're bad parents. (Parent 8)

I could have easily, yeah crumbled with guilt and things like that, but because of (the PLO) I don't feel guilty because I know that it's nothing that I've done or said. (Parent 9)

Parents understanding their child's behaviour

The PLO helps parents understand how their child has been taken advantage of – how the grooming process can trap them in an abusive controlling relationship, and how behaviours such as the misuse of drugs or alcohol can be symptomatic of abuse. Some parents said they now understood why their child may not have felt able to talk to them, even after experiencing a violent sexual assault. A number of parents interviewed described being bewildered and unable to cope because their child's behaviour had changed. Two parents who knew their child's behaviour was out of character described their relief when they found out this was typical of a child who had been groomed and was being controlled. Several parents highlighted that it helped to understand that it was not their child's fault if they tried to return to an abusive person/s, but a reflection of the level of control and fear they might be subject to.

You can understand it more, because you thought, 'Why should I put up with it?... Why did she let him do this? Why did she not just come back to us and tell us?' So yes, you can understand the hold that he had on her and she was so scared of him that she was scared to tell us. She used to turn to drink and it's a fear factor as well, but she (PLO) helped us understand why she did what she did. (Parent 7)

She'd (PLO) help me see her (the daughter's) side of things. Which helped me feel better knowing that it's not because she hates me, not because she thinks I'm being a cow or whatever, it's because what she's going through. She was on her own journey through all of this, and they helped me to see that side. (Parent 10)

The interview data suggest that parents were more able to respond empathetically, with warmth and acceptance toward their children, when they had greater understanding of what the child was going through. Knowing more about CSE helped parents to regulate their frustration or anxiety if they did not understand their child's perspective or behaviour. All 17 parents who completed evaluation forms agreed that contact with the PLO had helped them respond to their child's needs.¹⁵

This educative work was also extended to other family members. In one case the PLO ran a joint session on CSE for a child's mother and sisters because the family was struggling to understand why the child was going out, drinking and coming home late, and because the sisters thought their mother was favouring this child. The session challenged an attitude of blame towards the child affected by CSE, and re-framed their experience of her behaviour.

Even her sisters understood and they've been saving her now, you know like making her understand, sitting with her explaining to her. When she wants to go out they'll divert her attention to something else. (Parent 1)

15. The question was 'Has contact with the parent support worker helped you respond to your child's needs?' and possible responses were 'Yes', 'No', 'Somewhat' and 'Not Applicable'. Sixteen said 'yes' and one parent ticked 'somewhat'.

3.2 Parents supported to safeguard their children

In their interviews, the PLOs and PLO manager described working with parents, in high-need cases, to design and implement a set of steps that they can take to practically protect their child. From the PLO's perspective, plans should be co-created, working from an assumption that parents are the experts in relation to their child and need to be treated as equal partners in thinking about their welfare. Interviews with the PLOs and other Engage professionals highlight a shared belief that parents are at the frontline of safeguarding – managing risks on a day-to-day basis – and that listening to and supporting them should therefore make the child safer. The Engage PLO explained that in the early days of being supported, parents are given procedures and actions that they can take, in relation to reporting missing incidences, monitoring their child's phone use, logging the registration numbers of cars they get into, and any addresses they stay at.

PLOs explained that the advice given to each family is tailored to their needs and situation, and is developed and updated in consultation with the parents themselves in response to new information or risks. Plans can also be tailored to the needs of separated parents and to siblings who are affected by the exploitation. In one case described by the PLO, for example, the teenage brother of a girl being exploited was threatened by a much older perpetrator, so the family safety plan detailed an appropriate response to any similar incidents. PLOs make use of the cognitive triangle of thoughts, feelings and behaviours to help parents understand and reflect on how they respond to situations relating to their child and CSE. This might involve exploring what they would do if they meet a perpetrator in the street, or how they might respond when a child is verbally abusive to them. The PLO manager reported that this 'mentalising' helps parents find alternative thoughts, feelings and behaviours that empower them to respond in more helpful ways. One parent identified this on their evaluation form when asked if there was anything about the support from Pace that stood out as particularly helpful.

Writing everything down and writing plans with us. We struggled to remember when at crisis, so the writing meant we had a clear strategy when unable to think clearly for ourselves. (Evaluation Form 12)

Analysis of interviews with parents and professionals suggested that being empowered and equipped to safeguard their children through safety planning could have three effects:

- Parents having greater control in the home and confidence in their capacity to protect their child
- Parents reporting their child missing, which can reduce the risks when children are missing
- Parents sharing information with the police and other services.

Parents having greater control in the home and confidence in their capacity to protect

One of the consequences of being supported to develop safety plans is that parents can feel empowered to take positive action, and to take control of the home environment and their own responses to their child. Interviews with the PLOs suggested that perpetrators can take advantage of parents' uncertainty, confusion, frustration, or lack of understanding, to drive a wedge between the child and their family. In some interviews parents said they had been confused by their child's dramatic mood swings and changed behaviour. Interviews revealed parents' different responses from exerting control (for example trying to stop a child from leaving the house) to being unsure of what to do, or of losing confidence in their ability to create boundaries.

At the beginning my daughter would walk all over us. We were trying to keep the peace with her. We'd phone (the PLO) up and ask her for advice, even on like the small things of parenting. We seem to have lost all confidence... (The PLO) sort of went from the beginning she said, 'You need to take control back' and that's what we did. (Parent 8)

Regaining control was also noted by other parents, including a mother who said she had felt 'empowered' by being given 'plans of what to do, how to log it and just being very orderly with everything and just making me feel a bit stronger' (Parent 6). The PLO believed taking these actions was a key part of confidence building.

There might be ten actions on this 'missing from home plan', but it just gives them, even though they've contacted the police, reported missing from home, it's giving them the confidence to think, 'Yes, I'm a part of this, I'm a key player in this', and that's building their confidence as well. (Engage PLO)

Parents reporting their child missing

'Missing from home' plans are a key element of the safety planning process, according to PLOs and Engage professionals. A child going missing can be an indicator that they are at risk of, or are being, sexually exploited (Beckett et al, 2017), so these plans detail the steps parents should take if their child is missing. The PLO explained that once a missing from home plan was in place there was likely to be an increase in recorded missing incidences because parents then consistently tell the police when the child is missing. After that initial increase,

...we see a reduction in risk to the child because the length of time the child is exposed to perpetrators or potential riskier situations is reduced from days to maybe hours. (PLO manager).

It was beyond the remit of the evaluation to collect data on missing episodes or risk assessments, so we are unable to verify this. However, when asked about the help they had received from the PLO, some parents did state that they had begun to report their child missing. Similarly, some members of the Engage team identified missing incidences as an area where the PLO has an impact. They remarked that when parents reported missing incidences the police could search for the child, often checking specific locations/houses because of information also provided by parents.

It's a dramatic difference there when Pace isn't involved... Pace isn't involved and you're not seeing any improvements, they're still going missing, they're still not being reported, they're still getting in unknown cars with no registrations, still coming home under the influence. (Professional 10)

As a minimum, let's start reporting these children as missing as a start, that's something quite regularly Pace try and push through to them (parents)... Does it reduce the risk? Absolutely it does. Do they try and work with the kid to make sure that they're safe whilst they're missing? Yes, they do, and they'll try and do that within the family. (Professional 11)

Case example 1: Going missing

A professional in the Engage team described a mother who they felt had no understanding of CSE. According to the professional, the mother thought her daughter was safe, and just 'going out for rides in cars'. The Engage professional reported that the PLO worked with the mother to try to help her understand that the child was not staying with a friend but was missing from home and that this needed to be reported to the Police. The PLO helped the mother recognise when her daughter was coming home under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The interviewee described the impact on the mother as 'dramatic'. The child began to be reported missing, the mother became highly vigilant and implemented a range of safety measures in the home.

Parents sharing information with other services

As part of her one-to-one support for parents, the PLO spends time informing them about the signs their child may be being groomed or exploited, and trains them to identify these signs and collect information that can be passed to the police and other agencies as appropriate. As those in daily and close contact with the child, parents are in a good position to gather important information that can disrupt the abuse. All the parents who completed moderate/intense need evaluation forms agreed that contact with the PLO had helped them share information,¹⁶ and when asked if there were any specific ways the PLO 'had helped you as you've been trying to keep your child safe' five of the ten parents interviewed described some form of information-sharing.

When there was any information obviously about the things the girls were doing, I was passing everything to her and she was passing it to the police. She was telling me how to log everything, how to get as much things across as possible and every single bit of information to give it to try and keep the girls safe. (Parent 6)

One parent recounted sometimes texting the PLO in the middle of the night.

...so the next morning when she comes into work, and she has the mobile, she gets my message. Everything single thing that happens she'll be notified. (Parent 1)

A range of actions taken by parents were referred to in interviews with parents, professionals and PLOs, including: taking screen-shots of their children's computers; collecting clothing for DNA testing; taking information from phones; recording car number plates; and, where possible, monitoring/recording where the child is and who they are with, both online and off-line. Four professionals in the Engage team described this aspect of parental support as key to building 'the bigger picture' that helps them understand what is

happening to a child and how best to respond. In this way, the PLO can be a conduit, allowing information to flow between parents and other agencies, to develop police investigations and to improve the general safeguarding response. The PLO manager estimated that in most cases supported by Pace, information provided by parents had contributed to some form of 'action', from issuing a warning to a potential perpetrator to the case going to court.

3.3 PLO impact on family engagement in court cases

Holding perpetrators to account for their actions is a core element of a comprehensive response to CSE. There is therefore an increasing focus on the need to ensure that, wherever appropriate, perpetrators are investigated and pursued through the criminal justice system (DfE, 2017). Evidence suggests that involvement in such processes can be difficult and traumatic for children and their families, with clear gaps in support at this critical time (Beckett and Warrington, 2015; Beckett et al 2016; Warrington et al, 2017). As noted previously, one of the core aims of the PLO role was to provide intensive and long-term support to families whose case is going to court: from CPS referral to post-trial readjustment. This section explores the data on how well this aim was realised.

Not all parents involved in the evaluation had experience of court, and those that did had experience of different stages of the process. Nine of the parents who completed evaluation forms answered questions about support for their engagement in court processes, specifically whether the PLO had helped with:

1. Explaining what happens in a court case so they knew what to expect
2. Working with people from the Witness Service to make sure they got help from them
3. Offering support during the trial
4. Giving support after the trial ended.

16. The question was 'Has contact with the parent support worker helped you share information with the police and/or social services?' and possible responses were 'Yes', 'No', 'Somewhat' and 'Not Applicable'. Twelve parents responded 'Yes' and one responded 'Somewhat'.

All nine parents answered the first two questions and confirmed that they had received this support from the PLO. One did not answer the third question (support during trial) and three did not answer the fourth question (support post-trial), but all who did said they had received such support.¹⁷ Of the ten parent interviewees two had been through the experience of court and their child's court case had ended; four parents were in the process of their child's case going to court; one parent had received a 'No Further Action' decision on their child's case from the CPS; one child's court case had recently collapsed and not gone to trial; and two parents had no experience of a court case.

Parents being prepared, willing and able to go to court

Interviews with parents, PLOs and Engage team members suggested that significant barriers can stand between children and families and their attendance at court during a trial. These can include: fears about the emotional impact of the experience; low trust in police and lawyers; and uncertainty that a court case is in the best interests of their child. It is therefore important that families are given as much information and support as possible as they decide whether to go to court. One professional in the Engage team reflected that many of the children whose cases could go to court are traumatised by the offence, may be mistrustful of police, and are still coming to terms with the idea that they have been abused.

So you need somebody that's far more removed from the prosecution, that's very empathetic in the way that they work, that is more about joining up than breaking apart, because I'm breaking apart with the lad that they might've liked. They're (Pace) talking about joining up the family. (Professional 11)

Parents can be waiting a long time for a trial to begin, and the PLO explained that she often prepares families over months. One mother described the support she received in preparation for court, and the PLO 'going

over everything again and again because sometimes things weren't registering in my head'.

It was really helpful because I kind of knew what to expect and she broke it down for me in a simple language where in the courts half the things I didn't understand and how everything worked... She explained to me like going to court was scary, which she's say, 'Don't worry about it, I'm going to come in with you. You're going to stand in the witness box and just say whatever you have to say and come back out.' (Parent 10)

Once the trial begins, PLOs can provide various kinds of practical help that makes it possible for parents to attend court, including driving to and from court, arranging childcare for siblings, and staying with them for much of the trial itself if needed. One parent who had been helped in this way valued the PLO's sensitivity.

Like going to court, the trial, I wouldn't have been able to get there, (the PLO) came and picked me up every day. Nobody needed to know about it, she picked me up, dropped me off. If I didn't want her to pick me up from home, if I said a different location, she was prepared to do anything for me. (Parent 10)

Similarly, a health professional on the Engage team credited another family's attendance at court to the help they received from the PLO.

The family that I've just been involved with, I know the young girl was hard to engage anyway with any agency. She did see me a few times but it was always a running game. Whenever I tried to see her she wasn't there. I think (the PLO) had the same with the family... but I do think without that support, the family wouldn't have even gone to court without that support of getting there and understanding. (Professional 9)

17. The evaluation form asked parents to respond 'yes', 'no', 'somewhat' or 'not applicable' to these questions. The respondents who did not answer the later questions did not explicitly say they did not receive the support – they did not provide any answer.

Five professional interviewees (including one PLO) commented on the Engage team's strong record on child/family attendance at court, with three interviewees suggesting this rate was 100%. The evaluation was not able to corroborate this claim, but all five identified Pace support as a key driver of the team's success in this respect.

Parent/family emotional resilience through court case

As already noted, a court case can be very stressful for children and families, and they need support to navigate the process. The PLO described working with the police, Witness Service, barristers and judges to protect families' welfare during a trial, and to advocate for them to have control over as much of the process as possible – including choices over which entrance they use, how they give evidence and whether they have ushers/Witness Service volunteers sit with them. The PLO reported that because of the good relationships Pace has built with the local Witness Service, parents have also been provided with a separate waiting area, where they and their child can be assured of privacy and space.

As section 4.1 describes, professionals interviewed believe the PLO's pre-trial support is an important factor in parents attending court. Some professionals and parents also commented on the role of that support in sustaining the emotional resilience necessary to get through a court case. For example, one parent wrote on their evaluation form:

Support throughout was amazing but especially of court. We had been dreading attending but the support we received meant that we got through it. (Evaluation form 12)

Another parent reflected that the trial would have been significantly harder without support from the PLO.

I think it would have been really hard. I wouldn't have been able to go to the trial. There was so much, even the emotional support I got, I don't know, I would have been a nervous wreck. I was anyway, but still I had that support there... She was sat down there and I was watching all the time, and to know she was there it made a big difference. (Parent 10)

The emotional support provided to families during a trial was also valued by those professionals who mentioned it during interview.

If there has been a bad day in court or, especially when there's not the outcome that's expected, just having (the PLO) there rather than not just makes the process a whole lot easier and manageable for them, really. (Professional 6)

One social worker described how the support offered to an anxious parent by the PLO enabled her to focus on the needs of the child. She described the parent and child as 'really positive about the support that they'd had from both of us' (Professional 8).

The model of support developed by Pace involves being available to support parents beyond the end of a trial if necessary. Previous research has demonstrated that the post-sentencing period can be challenging and traumatic for victims and witnesses in CSE cases. People 'move on' and yet children and families are still processing the impact of their experiences (Beckett and Warrington, 2015). Some parents identified in interview or on their evaluation form that they particularly valued the long-term nature of Pace support, but no specific experiences of post-trial support were shared by parents.

3.4 Further outcomes for parents

Analysis of the evaluation data showed that the PLO had a positive impact for parents beyond the three areas of understanding CSE, safeguarding and support for engaging with court cases. These broader outcomes include: building parents emotional resilience, improved relationships in the home and meeting wider needs.

Parents' emotional resilience

All of the 17 parents who completed an evaluation form agreed that contact with the PLO had helped them and their family cope with the situation.¹⁸ Half of the parents interviewed and three out of four of the focus group members described the impact of the support in stronger language.

- She made such a big difference in my life; I couldn't have done it without her. (Parent 10)
- I wouldn't be here. (Focus group)
- I would have killed myself, or someone else. (Focus group)
- We couldn't have got through without the help. (Evaluation form 2)

Further analysis revealed three aspects of the PLO's work were important to parents in building their emotional resilience.

Parents having someone to talk to

Interviews with parents suggested that they can feel very isolated when their child is being exploited. Some of the reasons given included a partner not seeing the situation the same way or because one blamed the other for the abuse. Parents didn't necessarily feel able to talk to friends and family, and some described feeling less alone and calmer because they had the PLO to talk to on an ongoing basis

I had to keep things back and keep them to myself. But there was always (the PLO), I knew I could tell her everything. (Parent 6)

I think sometimes just to get it off your chest, for somebody to listen to you... After she's been, you feel a bit lighter. (Parent 7)

Four parents had also attended 'parent network days' where they met other families affected by CSE. These parents found these opportunities helpful for coming to terms with their own experiences in a non-judgmental environment. This supportive peer network was perceived by parents to be particularly valuable in light of the stigma and isolation that abuse can create.

Parents being supported to manage their emotions

It was clear from the interviews that parents often needed intense support and encouragement to help them manage the whirlwind of worry, chaos and conflict that could be generated as a result of their child being sexually exploited. They reported feeling stronger because of the support, which made a significant difference to their capacity to cope.

I think it could have gone really badly wrong for me mentally, emotionally, if I didn't have (the PLO) and everybody else there. (Parent 9)

There's sometimes like if my daughter's cutting herself or something, I can't handle it. Then I'll ring them and I'll say, 'I just can't handle it.' They'll come down, they'll talk to me, you know calm me down. Then if I need to be referred anywhere they'll refer me. But they'll always put a positive thing in my mind that I can do it and that gives me a boost again that yeah I'll do it, I'm not going to... I find my mind going, 'I'm not going to give up, I'm not getting depression'. (Parent 1)

18. The question was 'Has contact with the parent support worker helped you and your family cope with the situation?' and possible responses were 'Yes', 'No', 'Somewhat' and 'Not Applicable'.

Interviews with parents revealed that life could feel fraught and turbulent when their child is being exploited – ‘a battle’ in the words of one parent (Parent 9). This parent valued the PLO’s persistent reassurance that if they persevered, ‘the battle’ could be won. It was also helpful to be warned that even if things got worse before they got better, there was always light at the end of the tunnel.

Parents valued being given advice about how to act and feel calm. Some parents reported that this helped them regain control and confidence in the home, but for most it was primarily about managing the emotional turmoil of their child’s abuse. The PLO described in detail how she supported a parent attending an ‘Achieving Best Evidence’ (ABE) interview with her daughter. The parent was extremely distressed, and the PLO reported helping her with breathing techniques, focusing her on her daughter’s feelings, explaining exactly what would happen and how the video would be used in court, and then giving advice about how the parent could ‘ground’ herself when the anxiety returned at home.

Three parents talked about feeling hatred and violence towards the abuser/s, and one parent described setting off to look for a perpetrator in a rage, with no concern for the consequences. All three said the PLO had helped them manage that anger and understand the detrimental effect it might have on their child’s case if they tried to confront the perpetrator(s) in any way.

PLO support for calmer, warmer and more positive relationships in the home

The PLOs described supporting parents to interact with their child in ways that reduced conflict, acknowledging the challenges for parents whose child’s behaviour seems to be increasing the risk to them (for example going missing, drinking heavily, and spending time with known/suspected perpetrators of CSE). The Engage PLO explained how she approached this challenge with parents.

We know what you probably want to say to her, but it’s about saying to her ‘This is a safe place for you to come back to’. And even if you can’t say anything else, if you just say you love her and then you walk out of the room... It’s just about planting that seed. You don’t have to have, ‘Where have you been? I’ve been worried sick about you all night’. None of that, because then you’re pushing them out of the home, and what we want is for you to pull them back in. (Engage PLO)

Five of the ten parents interviewed reported that relationships in the home had improved because of the support of the PLO.¹⁹

It helped me understand her a lot more, which where I’d get angry and get really upset thinking, ‘Why is she being like this to me?’ It helped me understand that just give her a bit of time, just leave her. Kind of like taking it away, but understanding it from her side, how she was feeling and what she was going through. (Parent 10)

When parents understood that their child was a victim of exploitation the PLO sometimes observed an ‘unspoken’ shift that might reveal itself when the parent began to give the child hugs, for example. An increase in affection was a good sign of things improving in the home, with the parent quoted above explaining that her daughter now ‘showed me a lot more affection, we’re a lot more closer now than we were then’ (Parent 10). This impact on relationships also extended to siblings (see case example 2 below).

19. The other five were not asked about this and did not raise it, but this does not mean it wasn’t relevant in their cases.

Case example 2: Relationships in the home improving

A father who was interviewed recounted that his children had each struggled in different ways because of the sexual exploitation of their sister. One had to support her mother practically with parenting the younger siblings, and the younger boys felt resentful of the attention their sister was getting, began fighting a lot, and their school attainment suffered.

The PLO helped the parents access anger management support for their sons, and liaised with the school to help them understand the family's additional needs. As a result, the boys' behaviour improved and the parents found it easier to cope.

Parents receiving support to liaise with services and have wider needs met

Some parent interviewees described receiving the PLO's help with wider challenges they were facing as a family. This included help with appointments (including being given lifts) and the PLO attending meetings and liaising with various agencies on the parents' behalf. Two parents received support from the PLO for housing. In one situation, a mother and her two daughters were helped to access a refuge, and in another a family was supported after they had to leave their home in traumatic circumstances.

It was an arson attack, and (the PLO) had helped me quite a lot with searching for a house and helped us with food and clothing. Whatever we needed they helped at the time. (Parent 1)

Parents who experienced it appreciated the PLO's capacity to advocate for families in a wider sense. One parent reported that the family was experiencing a lot of stress because of a breakdown in relationship with their social worker. They explained that the PLO advocated for them and helped to get a new social

worker, identifying this as being one of the most important things the PLO did for them (Parent 7). Another parent wrote on their evaluation form that the PLO had 'sorted all difficulties with CAMHS' (Evaluation form 5).

This support was deeply valued in such instances, and illustrated the importance of PLOs' flexible and responsive approach to family needs. The approach mirrors effective support for young people affected by CSE, where workers respond to and advocate for, a young person's wider needs (Bovarnick, Scott and Pearce, 2017). However, this approach also requires the PLO to communicate clearly with families about what is beyond the role. A few professionals (including the Engage PLO) noted in interview that other agencies can assume the PLO will do 'parenting work' more generally, or parents can expect the emotional support offered to become a form of relationship advice or counselling. The PLO does receive calls for help with many things, and therefore also signposts parents to other agencies where appropriate.

4. PLO impact on Engage team work on CSE cases

The second area where the evaluation identified the PLO as having a significant positive impact is local multi-agency responses to CSE. The evaluation focused on the experiences and perspectives of professionals located in the Engage team, but as the quote below suggests, PLOs may also have a similar impact where they engage with other professionals in wider multi-agency contexts.

I know that she goes to the wider core groups and things like that, so it's not just within this multi-agency setting, it's wider than that. So, she will be informing a social worker and a school nurse and a teacher who are sat round that table. Because of her work with that parent, she will be able to explain from that parent's point of view what's happening at home. So, yeah, it affects us and wider. (Professional 4)

All the interviewees in the Engage team were positive about the contribution a PLO made to the work of the team. When asked to identify areas where the Pace service could improve, the majority of interviewees replied with variants of 'No, it's all positive', 'I can't speak highly enough', 'Really good at what she does'. Nine of the twelve Engage interviewees did however identify a need for the PLO post to be full-time, and/or for more than one post. Most of these professionals felt there was a need for parents to receive some form of early help. In general, the longer-serving members of Engage who had more experience of Pace provided more detailed observations and spoke particularly positively about the work of the PLO. Staff who had joined the team more recently were positive, but still learning about Pace and the work they do.

4.1 Professionals' understanding of family needs/capacities in CSE cases

A number of Engage professionals described having a PLO sitting in the same office as other agencies as having had a positive impact on those agencies' awareness and understanding of how CSE affects parents, siblings and the wider family. The PLO and PLO manager who have worked in the team were described as having rich and extensive experience of local cases, which helps team members recognise how exploitation affects the family environment, and has created a significant shift in consciousness for some of these agencies. Two interviewees from the police described Pace as having had a significant impact on their approach to policing cases of CSE since the inception of the Engage team. They suggested this was the result of PLOs carrying the experiences of the family into a multi-agency environment, and advocating for parents to be recognised as partners in safeguarding. One police officer described coming to understand how perpetrators actively undermine families, and the additional risks created when parents blame their children.

I would never have known about that really without having worked with people that thought about that sort of stuff. It makes an awful lot of sense when you see and it's explained to you by people that can give you examples – local examples – of jobs that you've worked on. (Professional 11)

Because of their influence in the immediate multi-agency environment, PLOs can help other agencies understand the whole family's needs and behaviour, and to recognise parents' rights and capacities.

Professional empathy and recognition of parents' needs

When asked, all Engage interviewees agreed that the PLO had aided their understanding of how CSE affected parents and families. Examples given by some interviewees included professionals recognising that CSE could place severe strain on the family unit, anticipating parents' tendency to blame themselves, and professionals identifying their own tendency to blame parents.

Going back to when I were a bit more naïve and just joining the team and something was happening with a child, you'd think, 'Why aren't the parents doing something about it?' You kind of put the blame on the parents. But I think when you see it from the other side and how it's explained by the people that are working with the parents, things aren't as they seem. (Professional 3)

Four Engage interviewees reported that the PLO helped other professionals to see the child in the wider context of the family, including family history and various other challenges parents might be managing alongside CSE. One social worker described having 'blinkers' on when thinking about the child, and valued the PLO making her aware of the parents' thoughts and feelings (Professional 6). Another social worker particularly appreciated the PLO highlighting the emotional impact of CSE on parents, and how this might affect their ability to care for their child. This worker identified the key learning as '...not to blame parents, not to judge parents, and to offer them support' (Professional 4).

Professional recognition of parents' rights and capacities

While helping professionals understand parents' needs, PLOs also advocate for parents' right to be involved and informed in their child's case, and for their capacity to safeguard their children. As previously discussed, this contrasts with a child protection model in which parental capacity is assessed but not assumed. One police officer summarised this position – acknowledging that parental need or lack of understanding did not mean parents were incapable.

My experience is, most parents aren't deliberately failing to protect their children. Are they making mistakes? Yes. Do they need support and help? Yes, but they're not to blame.

From this officer's perspective, Pace had 'brought the voice of the parents to the table of every case' and as a result officers had learned to always involve the family – 'that's the biggest thing I've learnt from Pace, without a shadow of a doubt' (Professional 11). Some members of the Engage team reported having changed their practice because of this influence, and when asked to provide an example, one social worker said:

Visiting the home address more rather than just seeing the child in school. Letting the parents know that you're also around, give them your contact details if they need something specific for the child, where they can contact you. Just involving them in every step of the way, bearing in mind the child's confidentiality, not giving them too much but just working together with Pace, and many a time we did joint visits to the parent while the child was away. (Professional 10)

4.2 Professionals treating parents as partners in safeguarding

Section 3.3 outlined the potential impact of parents being equipped and empowered to safeguard their children, in terms of information sharing and creating a safe home environment. The data suggested that this is not something Pace can achieve alone; it requires the support of the wider multi-agency team. To maintain that approach, those professionals need to be made aware of the needs and capacities of parents, as demonstrated in 4.1. Interviews suggested three kinds of impact achieved through the PLO helping the team to become aware in this way: the team listens and responds to parents' views; professionals follow through on safeguarding plans because of Pace advocacy and information flows to and from parents.

Professionals listening and responding to parents views

The PLOs was described by some Engage team members as a conduit for the voice of parents, empowering them by representing their perspectives and experiences. One police officer described this as helping the police to 'slow down' and take account of parents' concerns.

What we want as police officers is we want the evidence, that's what it comes down to, whereas (the PLO) will come in and say, 'I know you do but they're saying this and this, this is what they're thinking about it' and it just makes you more open to other suggestions that you are not going about it the right way and sometimes, as police officers, it's our job to prosecute and sometimes it's not all about prosecution. (Professional 7)

Professionals following through on safeguarding plans because of Pace advocacy

As described in 3.4, the PLO works closely with other agencies within and beyond Engage while also retaining the capacity to challenge them if they

are excluding parents or not following through on agreed actions for the family. This balancing act is important because of the value to parents of the PLO's independence from statutory services. Several parents described their relief at having the PLO attend meetings with them. They could feel overwhelmed and intimidated by these settings.

Whenever I'm in the meeting my mind just goes blank and I can't remember something. (The PLO) supports me in that and she'll just put proper pressure on them which is actually really been needed when something's not been done. (Parent 1)

The same parent described the PLO's support in meetings when professionals appeared to be avoiding discussing things that were important to her.

You know they avoid that question, they won't answer it, and they jump onto the next question. But then (the PLO) will point back, you know, listening, what's done about it, or what's going to happen about it. So that's what I like about her. (Parent 1)

Another parent identified a recent situation where a 'marker' had not been put on her daughter that would trigger her being returned home if found by the police. The PLO addressed this, to make sure the agreed safety plan was being implemented. A professional in the Engage team remarked that the PLO '...keeps fighting until they get what they want. If there is social care involved, it's getting things moving, getting things sorted for them' (Professional 9).

Information flowing to and from parents

Information-sharing was described as 'the key piece' by one Engage team member (Professional 11) in terms of how Pace work with other agencies, and eight of the twelve professionals interviewed highlighted the quality and quantity of information provided by the PLO as being particularly valuable.²⁰

You get better information from families where Pace are involved. I think when Pace become involved parents get a better education about what the risks are and what the signs are to look out for and the importance of sharing that information and the opportunity to share the information to somebody specifically that's there to listen to them. (Professional 8)

Parents and carers are key, a lot of the time, to holding that information, and (the PLO) is able to train them to look for that information. What one parent might think is minor information, (the PLO) can advise, "well, you know, that's really important to us in the team, so we need you to share that" (Professional 6)

These eight interviewees described the following aspects of information-sharing being made possible through the PLO liaising with and supporting parents affected by CSE:

- A pathway is open for information that can support investigation and safeguarding actions to be shared with other agencies (see case example 3)
- Parents' energies are channeled into partnering with those agencies
- Pace can manage, regulate and improve the quality of that information using their knowledge of CSE.

The proximity and good working relationships reported between members of the Engage team aids this process, with several professionals describing 'catching up' with the PLO at least daily, if not multiple times a day. The PLO explained that if she had been out to visit a parent, she would often ring the young person's worker as soon as she got into the car. This liaison also helped make sure that information was flowing back to parents. All twelve of the parents who completed question 4c on the evaluation form agreed that contact with the PLO had 'helped make sure you were kept informed about your case by the police and/

20. The other four interviewees did not discuss information sharing.

or social services'.²¹ However one parent who was interviewed had passed information to the police via the PLO, but was not kept informed of how it was used.

What happens to all this information when it goes to the police, what do they actually do? Do they just leave it and think, 'Well it's not important'? Or do they actually do something or check on these guys? I didn't know what happened after that. (Parent 5)

Case example 3: Sharing information:

The PLO reported that she was supporting a mother who was caring for her own parents as well as responding to the sexual exploitation of her daughter. Faced with this highly stressful situation, the PLO said the mother would often find herself shouting at her daughter when she came home late at night, so she helped the mother with techniques to stay calm and communicate her concern instead of getting angry.

On one occasion when her daughter returned home early in the morning the PLO explained that the mother could say, 'I'm really glad you're home, why don't you go and have a shower and I'll make you a cup of tea' and she then gathered her daughter's clothes. The child assumed they had been put in the wash, but they were given to the police. The DNA of two offenders was on the child's clothes and in her underwear. This evidence was used alongside CCTV evidence of the child and offenders to achieve a 'victimless prosecution' in which the child did not have to attend court. The PLO concluded that this was possible 'because the parent remembered the sessions we'd delivered, about underwear and contact DNA, and was able to then call the police office to come and collect that'.

4.3 Professional decision-making

When professionals understand parents' needs and treat them as partners, they have access to more information, providing them with a holistic picture of the family environment and what is happening in the child's life. This enables them to make better decisions in terms of safeguarding, parents' needs and capacity, and investigation.

Professionals making better safeguarding decisions (child, siblings and peers)

Professionals gave several examples of the PLO had provided information that helped them come to new conclusions about a child's needs or situation. The Engage team valued 'bouncing ideas off each other', in the words of one social worker (Professional 8), and the Engage team manager particularly valued the way this information could improve decision making.

It allows me to make judgments on cases and challenge my workers on their thinking. If they're potentially going along with, 'They're not using alcohol', and then you speak to (the PLO) who says, 'Well, actually, mum's telling me...', so we can all use that information to challenge each other and think about recommendations to the care plan then. (Professional 11).

This officer explained that, because of the influence of the PLO, the police were trying to involve parents in decision making much more often. He described parental involvement as adding 'a massive weight' to the decisions taken by the team, as well as creating much greater confidence that those decisions were well founded and safe. To illustrate this, he gave the example of a case of sexual activity between teenagers which did not appear to be exploitative or abusive, but where concerns had been raised. In this situation, he had sent an officer to speak to the parents, to find out what their concerns were and to open a line of communication with the police

21. Q4c was 'Has contact with the PLO helped make sure you were kept informed about your case by the police and/or social services?' and possible answers were 'Yes', 'No', 'Somewhat' and 'Not applicable'.

This is an example of the shift in policing approach described earlier, where information is not just used for investigative purposes, but also as part of an ongoing dialogue with families that improves general safeguarding and helps the police makes more informed decisions.

Engage professionals described becoming more aware of the wider family and siblings through the work of the PLO, identifying ways that CSE could affect siblings (for example loss of parental attention, being targeted by groomers) and their need for support. As a result, one professional now 'made a fuss' of siblings, involving them and engaging them in conversations about safety. She explained:

It was like a learning curve because you're not just working with one that's allocated on your caseload, this child is in a family unit and Pace taught me that, saying look at the wider circle. (Professional 10)

That wider circle also involves peers, and some Engage interviewees particularly highlighted the PLO making new links between different young people, perpetrators, locations and pieces of information, that others had not been aware of.

Professional judgments about parental capacity and support needs

The PLO in a multi-agency team provides information about how families are coping, allowing other agencies to amend and update their own responses. Working in a co-located office allows the PLO to brief colleagues very quickly, which improves wider awareness of how best to engage with families on a day-to-day basis. One Engage professional described the PLO's involvement in a case as providing 'the broader picture', which allows the team to understand how the situation is affecting the parents '...or if there is something amiss in the home that perhaps is contributing to missing from home episodes' (Professional 8).

Alongside promoting an empathetic response to parents, the PLO also helps social workers assess parental capacity to safeguard. The Engage team promote parents as partners in child protection responses to CSE, but they also acknowledge that some parents struggle to support their child. This information is important for assessing how safe the home is, and what further support might be needed.

She (the PLO) would be able to talk to us about mum's deteriorating mental health and physical health, and she will then be able to say, 'I'm concerned that she won't be able to report (the child) missing in the same way that she used to'. So it's not just that advocating for mum in terms of 'social workers need to do this and young people's workers aren't doing that', it's putting that context forward of 'This is the impact I think it will have on that young person's risk of CSE'. (Professional 4)

The same interviewee gave a different, but related, example of a child's care plan being drawn up that involved the child staying at home with her mother, based on information provided by the PLO about how active and supportive the mother was in protecting her child.

Information informs the direction of investigations

Finally, information provided by the PLO was described as significant in affecting the direction and outcome of police investigations into CSE cases by some Engage interviewees. One officer remarked that:

Quite often you'll be sitting in a briefing in the morning and (the PLO) will phone or text and it's, 'Oh it's such a body's mum, she was seen getting in a car last night.' So we can more or less straightaway check that vehicle and we've got that intel sort of progression. (Professional 3)

Another senior police officer described the ‘association charts’ created by the PLO and parents, which map a child’s relational network and provide information about the links between different children and perpetrators. He reflected:

Would we have had that before? Well no, definitely not. We didn’t make the links, that’s half the trouble with CSE isn’t it, because you don’t make the links because you don’t know. So the family are providing us with information that we would never have got without Pace being there. (Professional 11)

While these examples are insufficient to achieve prosecutions, they are necessary and important aspects of building the case for prosecution, and some interviewees suggested they increased the chances of a case going to court.

4.4 Multi-agency partnership

The Engage team is one of the earliest examples of multi-agency co-located responses to CSE, and previous evaluation has highlighted a strong ethos of agencies having distinct roles but working closely in partnership (Palmer and Jenkins, 2014). Some Engage interviewees reported that Pace enable an effective division of labour within the team through their specific support for parents.

Firstly, this is because Pace liaison with, and support for, parents means that other agencies can focus on their primary operational tasks and engage with parents in more strategic ways. This aspect of the PLO’s work appeared to be particularly valuable to the police. One officer remarked that she spent lots of time visiting the homes of families that were not being supported by the PLO, visiting up to three times a week to keep these families updated on their cases – a workload that is very difficult to maintain and manage. The PLO’s support was also perceived to be very helpful during a criminal trial, when police needed to focus on the case itself (see case example 4).

Secondly, several interviewees identified ways that the work of Pace can contribute to other agencies achieving their objectives, whether through providing helpful information, advancing an investigation or supporting safeguarding. For example, one police officer remarked: ‘They’ve made investigations a lot more robust and a lot easier for us to get on with what we should be doing’ (Professional 7). Another interviewee explained that the presence of Pace could enable the police to be ‘the bad guys’ when some aspect of case management was viewed negatively by parents (Professional 11). In relation to social care, one interviewee asserted that the PLO’s capacity to work with parents made it easier for them to focus on supporting children.

The young girl is quite emotionally needy. She contacts me a lot and the parents are similar in many ways, but (the PLO’s) involvement means that I’m not having to deal with the child and the parents. It means that (the PLO) can focus on the parents, I can focus on the child. (Professional 8)

Case example 4: Agencies focus on core work

An interviewee from the police described a trial that had involved six sets of parents, which became overwhelming for the officers because of parents’ questions. In response, the PLO set up a weekly meeting with the families. The time was used to remind parents of key information about CSE, and the police were invited to attend and update the families all together. The interviewee explained that trials required the police to spend a lot of time liaising with judges and barristers, and the presence of Pace enabled them to concentrate on the work of gathering and presenting evidence to the court.

Case example 4 continued

I don't know how we would have got those children and the parents, particularly because they were obviously guiding the children in what to expect and where it was and the visits to the court beforehand. All that was just taken away from me, and the pressure for me, I could concentrate on the evidence and presenting that... It was one of those situations that when he was convicted, he got 14 years, it was for me a pivotal turning point because it showed the value of Pace within the whole investigation. It was massive. (Professional 11)

4.5 Dual support

A previous evaluation of Pace described the dual support offered to families by children's social care working alongside PLOs as being the vital component of success (Palmer and Jenkins, 2014). Engage interviewees still identify this co-working approach as being necessary and effective, and described two key aspects of it in addition to what has already been described.

- The PLO removing barriers to other agencies working with families
- Children and parents having separate support

Parental engagement with other agencies

Several professionals in the Engage team conveyed that the PLO played a very valuable role in helping to 'prepare the ground' for them to build their own relationships with families. Sometimes this support was necessary because families had previous negative experiences of these agencies; at other times it was simply that the PLO was perceived to be best-placed to explain the role, processes and culture of the other agencies to parents. All 13 of the parents completing the moderate/intense need evaluation forms said 'Yes'

when asked if contact with the PLO had 'helped you understand the role of the police and/or social services in your child's case'.

One police interviewee regularly called on the PLO to make initial contact with families.

I always ask this kind of question, before we go to the address, 'Can you give them the heads up who we are and what we're like' because it's a massive barrier that the police are coming to the house. (Professional 7)

The same officer recalled a specific situation where he had previously jailed the father of a family he was now working with on a CSE case. The PLO engaged with the family initially to help them understand CSE and what the police needed to do to protect their child. The officer explained that this support was crucial, and that the investigation 'ran smoothly' as a result.

The very first part of the investigation is the most pivotal part because that sets the precedent for the rest of it and without that bit, we would have lost that. We just would. And that wasn't anything to do with the child, that was to do with the family. (Professional 7)

Some Engage professionals reported that families could also be nervous about social workers, and two suggested that when Pace were involved, parents were more willing to let social workers talk to and support their child. In one case the sexual health worker described a mother as being very cautious about allowing her child to see the worker outside the home, but with the PLO's support the mother came to see her daughter's need for time and space. (Professional 10)

Dual support from PLO and social care

Finally, some Engage interviewees spoke about the value of the child and parent having separate workers, who nevertheless work closely with each other. Having two workers was perceived to be helpful for children who may be more willing to accept support if they see

their parents being helped, but who might otherwise assume their social worker shares their information with their parents.

You do get the parents, if they see a professional and they're at their wits' end and they need your help, they'll be asking you constantly but then it does get blurred with the child because if they see you having that conversation with mum, they say 'Why would I tell you anything because you're going to tell my mum?' Whereas if (the PLO) is there it helps. (Professional 9).

In one case, a parent had been sharing information with the child's social worker, which was problematic for the social worker when the child discovered this. When the PLO started working with the parent, the social worker reported that her relationship with the child improved (Professional 8). The same interviewee also highlighted the importance of information sharing to effective co-working, explaining that the PLO would visit a parent after a crisis and get a 'full picture' of what was going on, before updating the worker who then visited the child. She observed that, in general, information from parents was very helpful to their work with the child.

Co-working also strengthened the multi-agency response in other ways. Workers could reinforce key messages about CSE and safety planning with children and parents, come to similar perspectives about families' needs, and help children and parents understand each other better.

(The PLO's) trying to work with that parent, offering more appropriate responses. She's then talking to us about what's happening for that parent, why she's offering those inappropriate responses. Young people's workers can then work with the child to help them understand why they're getting inappropriate responses and what they can do to support their parents to not act in that way. So, it's that kind of backwards and forwards, I suppose. (Professional 4).

5. Discussion

This chapter concludes the report by reflecting on the relational safeguarding model in relation to principles, outcomes, barriers to and enablers of service delivery, and areas for improvement.

5.1 The relational safeguarding model: outcomes

The original project placed a PLO into the Engage team who would use Pace's relational safeguarding model to: increase parents' understanding of CSE, support parents to safeguard their child; and provide support through the judicial process for families whose case went to court. Chapter three of this report focused on these outcomes, and the report also presents an analysis of a wider set of outcomes identified by those who took part in the evaluation.

Outcomes linked to different stakeholders

Many of the outcomes detailed in the evaluation were commented on by both professional and parent interviewees, but some were highlighted more by one group. For example, the outcome most discussed by professionals was 'Better understanding of and relationship with parents'²² whereas the outcome most discussed by parents was 'Ability to cope'.²³ The relational safeguarding model could therefore be updated to capture some of the impact of the PLO on these different groups and how they relate to the activities of the PLO (for example, 'professionals improved understanding of family situation' because of information sharing).

Relationships between outcomes

Diagram 1 draws together the analysis in chapter three to show how the work of the PLO creates the three

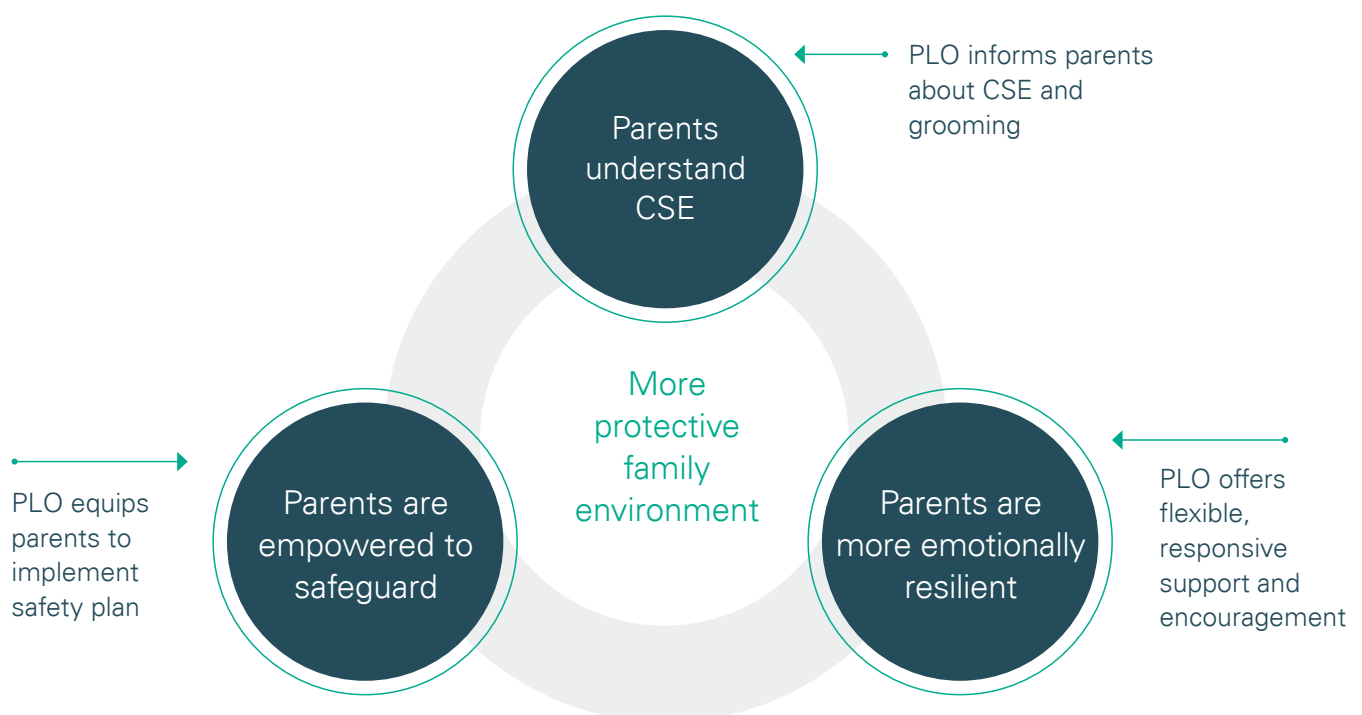
22. Thirty-three excerpts from nine interviews with professionals.

23. Twenty-three excerpts from nine interviews with parents

core outcomes evidenced through the evaluation data presented. While it does not articulate the relationships between these outcomes, there was data to suggest that they were causally linked. For example, some interviewees suggested that understanding grooming helps parents not to blame themselves for the situation, which in turn creates greater emotional resilience to the impact of the abuse. There was not sufficient data to explore these mechanisms, but interviewees with the most experience of parent support in CSE cases did comment frequently on the links between the PLO's activities and different outcomes. This included the two PLOs and the PLO manager, and members of the Engage team who had experience of working alongside the PLO on several different CSE cases. It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to analyse and present this data, but these interviews contain assertions about some of the causal mechanisms that underpin the relational safeguarding model. Examples of some of these micro-theories arising in the interviews are presented below, which would warrant future testing.

1. When parents stop blaming themselves for the abuse, some of their confidence as parents is restored, which in turn helps them to build a consistent and safe environment for their child.
2. Co-creating a safety plan with the PLO motivates parents to implement safeguarding actions and to take control of the situation in their home.
3. Parents' confidence increases when they share information that they see can mobilise action from the police.
4. Establishing a consistent and predictable response in the home shows the child that their parents are taking action because they love them and want them to be safe and has a calming effect in the house.
5. Encouraging parents to respond to their child with consistency and warmth reinforces that the home is a safe place and means the child is more likely to respond positively or disclose their experiences in the future.

Diagram 1: PLO outcomes for parents



6. PLO support for parents before and during a trial means that parents are more likely to attend court. If the CPS is confident that families are supported to attend court they are more likely to prosecute a case.
7. Family attendance at court indicates that witnesses will testify against the defendant and increases the chances that the defendant will plead guilty.

These and other theories were not evidenced strongly enough to be included in the evaluation. However further research could explore them further, and develop project-level theories about the impact of the PLO in relation to parental support, multi-agency working and criminal justice outcomes.

5.2. The relational safeguarding model: principles

Interviews with parents, professionals and the PLOs highlighted some of the principles that appear to underpin the effectiveness of the relational safeguarding model. This list of principles is not meant to be comprehensive, but summarises the perceptions of those interviewed for the evaluation, and reflects previous research with Pace (Palmer and Jenkins, 2014). Further work would need to take place to explore how these relate to the work of other PLOs, or reflect the specific context of the Engage team. The first three are closely related and could be summarised as 'Protecting children by strengthening the family'

Empowering

At the heart of the PLO role is a belief in the capacity and significance of parents. This approach is strengths-based – looking to identify the resources and insight parents already have, and to empower them to use these. This principle is also about recognising and removing the barriers to that empowerment, whether by making information accessible or challenging agencies whose practice alienates or intimidates parents.

Parent-focused

Pace are the only agency in the Engage team working solely to support and strengthen parents, and this was valued by both parents and professionals. Parents felt they had someone they could trust, who was on their side. Professionals saw the benefits of parents' needs being met. By listening effectively to parents, the PLO and the parent could co-construct safety plans that would reflect the parents' concerns and secure their engagement.

Dual support

Pace suggest that the most effective way for a PLO to operate is alongside children's support workers, to create dual support for both children and parents within the family. There is a misperception that focusing on parents' needs is incompatible with the welfare of the child being paramount. Pace assert that listening to and strengthening parents makes the family safer for the child, but this requires a systemic view that looks at the child's experience in the context of the family.

Knowledgeable about CSE and families

Interviewees valued the specialist CSE knowledge provided by the PLO, suggesting that it meant safeguarding plans were more likely to be effective, parents felt understood and professionals respected the PLO's opinion.

Independent support in a multi-agency team

Parents can be intimidated by or concerned about social services and the police, and can feel there is less stigma and scrutiny associated with being supported by Pace. This openness to Pace may also be related to the PLO's manner, which parents described as 'approachable', 'friendly', 'down to earth', 'warm' and 'real'. It is also likely to reflect the voluntary status of the organisation, and the PLO's capacity to advocate for parents while still working in a close-knit multi-agency team which has high levels of trust and information sharing.

Available, flexible and responsive

Parents reported the PLO's support to be flexible and responsive to their needs. They said she encourages contact beyond office hours and is flexible in terms of how to meet, where to meet and what to discuss or work on. This flexibility is important in making sure the service is accessible to different parents, in including vulnerable parents and parents from BME communities. Some parents interviewed had been supported for up to two or three years.

5.3 Barriers and enablers

Multi-agency environment

Local context can be a significant influence on the operation of a service. As an organisation, Pace asserts that a PLO is most effective within a specialist CSE multi-agency hub with an organisational culture that:

1. Recognises the benefit of supporting and working with affected parents and families
2. Does not blame parent/s or families for the sexual exploitation of a child
3. Respects the independence and different roles of NGOs and charity sector workers within the hub. (Pace, 2016:12)

Although a full analysis of context was beyond the scope of the evaluation, the data gathered did highlight the significance of the multi-agency environment for the outcomes achieved. The character and history of the Engage team has been influenced positively by Pace, and is also a highly supportive environment for their work. This is a multi-agency team with a great deal of experience of dealing with the victims and perpetrators of CSE, and of working with Pace. The result is a team that believes strongly in the value of working with parents, and of each agency working to its distinct strengths. Interviewees reported that the co-location of the whole team in one office is conducive for the creation of these supportive, challenging and trusting inter-agency relationships. Observation of the team demonstrated how information can be shared, tested and acted upon as a result of the daily briefings.

Experience of the PLO

Chapter 3 identified the importance of the PLO educating parents, families and multi-agency professionals about CSE. Interviewees within the Engage team recognised that Pace's capacity to achieve this was clearly related to the experience and competence of the PLO in the team. Both the current and former PLO had worked there for over five years, and the current worker had also previously worked alongside Pace, as a child support worker within Engage. This enhances Pace's work and reputation locally, but, as one interviewee acknowledged, might be hard to replicate in other areas, or with someone else less experienced and knowledgeable.

Funding and commissioning

Re-allocation of funding over the last 18 months has led to the PLO prioritising high-risk/high-need cases, which means that fewer families are being supported at the point of early help or even investigation. Funding challenges are not exclusive to Pace, and the Engage team have also recently lost a Barnardo's worker and a Brook worker. There was consensus across the Engage team that, while thresholds were necessary, it would be valuable to have more hours or another worker, so that Pace could support parents before their cases go to court, or when concerns are first raised. There is clear evidence of the PLO contributing information to support the work of the team to make links and intervene early to assess risk. However, there is also a potential tension between the wider team culture on early intervention/prevention and the current capacity of the PLO to support that work.

Geography

The Engage team cover Blackburn with Darwen, a relatively small unitary authority. While this is advantageous for the team, the PLO also works across East Lancashire – a much wider geographical area – which is particularly challenging for a charity that provides intense one-to-one support. Cross-authority work like this creates potential for information sharing about perpetrators and victims, but also involves working across multiple systems, which can slow the work down.

5.4 Service improvement

Both parents and professionals were asked to identify areas where the PLO service could improve. Individual parents suggested the following:

- A 24-hour help-line
- PLO support available at the weekends when parents might be talking to officers who don't know their case
- A counselling service run by Pace, to build on the safety of the relationship with the PLO, so parents didn't have to re-tell their stories to new professionals
- Sufficiently friendly and private spaces to meet for drop-in and/or one-to-one sessions.²⁴

Four parents suggested there was a need for either more PLOs or greater security of funding to ensure parents can be adequately supported. The remaining parents did not identify any areas for improvement.

Nine of the twelve Engage interviewees identified a need for the PLO post to be full-time, and/or for more than one post to be available in the area. Most of these professionals felt there was a need for parents to receive some form of early help, which was not possible with one part-time PLO. Two Engage members also suggested there was a need for Pace to be able to access the central shared IT system that other agencies used.

5.5 Conclusion

All the parents and professionals who took part in this evaluation valued the work of Pace, and those who had worked with or been supported by the PLO the longest were the most enthusiastic. All 17 parents who completed an evaluation form agreed that they would recommend PACE to another parent in the same position as them. The evidence demonstrates the benefits of the PLO role in strengthening parents emotionally and practically to safeguard their children, and in building the capacity of the multi-agency team to treat parents as partners in CSE cases.

24. This suggestion was made in a focus group by a parent who had been attending group and drop-in sessions at a community centre.

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Appendix 1: Parent/Carer Evaluation Form (moderate/intense need)

1. How would you rate the support you received from the PACE worker?

Very bad	<input type="radio"/>
Bad	<input type="radio"/>
Ok	<input type="radio"/>
Good	<input type="radio"/>
Very good	<input type="radio"/>

2. Please tell us why you responded this way:

--

3. Please answer the questions below:

Has contact with the parent liaison officer...	Yes	No	Somewhat
a) Helped you understand how CSE might affect your child?			
b) Helped you respond to your child's needs?			
c) Helped you and your family cope with the situation?			

4. If police or social services have been involved in supporting your child please complete the following:

Has contact with the parent liaison officer...	Yes	No	Somewhat	Not applicable
a) Helped you understand the role of the police and/or social services in your child's case				
b) Helped you share information with the police and/or social services				
c) Helped make sure you were kept informed about your case by the police and/or social services				

5. If your child’s case went to court please complete the following

Did the parent liaison officer help you in any of these ways?	Yes	No	Somewhat	Not applicable
a) Explaining what happens in a court case so you knew what to expect				
b) Working with people from the Witness Support team to make sure you got help from them				
c) Offering you support during the trial				
d) Giving you support after the trial ended. <i>(This could have been explaining the sentence, telling you where you could get further help, or some other form of help)</i>				

6. Were there any other ways the parent liaison officer helped you that you’d like to tell us about?

7. Would you recommend PACE to another parent in the same position?

Yes

No

I’m not sure

☐

☐

☐

Please tell us why:

8. What could PACE do to improve their support for parents?

Appendix 2: Interview schedule

Parent's experience of the PLO

Which Pace worker have you been supported by?

1. To start, can you tell me briefly about how you came into contact with the PLO?
2. What kind of support have they given you and your family?
3. What difference has it made for you and your family having the PLO involved?

Safeguarding child

4. Has the PLO helped you understand more about exploitation?
 - a. What kinds of things have been most helpful to know?
 - b. What practical difference did this make for you, and your family?
5. Are there any specific ways that the PLO has helped you as you've been trying to keep your child safe? *Examples: Monitoring their phone/online use/ contacts/cars they're getting into; Sharing info with the police or other agencies; building trust with the child and improving communication and disclosure*
6. Is there anything else you'd like to say about the PLO's impact on how you've been supporting your child?

Impact on wellbeing of parent and family

7. Can you tell me a bit about whether the PLO's support has had any impact (positive or negative) on your own wellbeing? *Your health, ability to cope, etc.*
8. What about any effect on other members of your family? *Partner, children, wider*
9. Has having the PLO involved had any impact on relationships between family members in any way? *Can you tell me more?*

Impact of PLO on parent relationship with other agencies

10. Going to read out a list of different professionals – can you tell me which of these agencies have been involved in your child's case?

- a. Police
 - b. Social worker
 - c. Any local projects/services that have supported your child specifically around CSE? (specialist/ youth)
 - d. School
 - e. GP
 - f. Any other health professionals (nurses/Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services?)
 - g. Lawyers
 - h. Faith or community groups?
 - i. Any other people who have been helping or involved with your case?
11. To your knowledge has the PLO worked **with** any of these other people, as part of trying to support you?
 - a. Prompts – could be sharing information with them, advocating for you, helping you understand what they do, helping you in meetings
 - b. When there are lots of agencies involved it's important they work together well and make it easier, not harder for families – so I'm wanting to get a sense of how well PACE did that for you...
 - c. What difference did that make, if any?
 12. Is there anything about the support you get from Pace that is different to these other agencies and how they work?
 13. Anything else you'd like to tell us about the PLO and how she's worked with other professionals you or your family have been in contact with?

Prosecution

14. I'm going to run through some of the support PACE workers can provide, can you tell me whether they helped you and your family with these? *Can you tell me a bit more about what that support looked like? What difference did that make?*
 - a. Supporting you to give any information or intelligence to the police as part of an investigation *Can you tell me about that? What happened as a result?*

- b. Supporting your family with police interviews or witness statements
- c. Providing support while the Police and Crown Prosecution Service are deciding what if any charges will be made and whether the case will go to court
- d. Talking to you or your family before the court case about what to expect
- e. Working with any witness support programs available to you
- f. Providing support during the trial
- g. Support after the trial finished
- h. Explaining the sentence
- i. Telling me about other organisations or people who could support me
- j. Keeping me informed about what the police or CPS or court were doing

Key moments

- 15. Is there anything the PLO did/said that sticks in your mind/was particularly helpful
- 16. Anything they did/said that was unhelpful?

Improvements/future development

- 17. Are there any ways you think PACE could improve the support they offer to parents?

Before we close, is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience of being supported by the PLO?



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